

Kosmas and Posey Introduce Legislation to Encourage Commercial Spaceflight Industry

Bipartisan Bill Would Create "Centers of Excellence" to Bring Public and Private Sectors Together for Research and Development

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(Washington, DC) — Today, Congresswoman Suzanne Kosmas (FL-24) and Congressman Bill Posey (FL-15) introduced legislation to help minimize the impact of the impending human spaceflight gap on Central Florida's economy by encouraging the development of the commercial spaceflight industry. The bipartisan bill would establish a competitive Commercial Space Transportation R&D "Centers of Excellence" (COE) program within NASA.

The Centers of Excellence program will create university-based public-private partnerships to support commercial spaceflight research and development with stakeholders in industry and government. Aimed at improving U.S. space transportation competitiveness and safety, they would focus on topics such as spaceflight passenger and crew training and qualification, space transportation policy analysis, spaceport safety and range system development, biomedical countermeasures, aerospace workforce training and certification, space vehicle design, including materials and engineering R&D, and space weather.

"With the looming spaceflight gap, it is clear that the commercial spaceflight industry must play a significant role in maintaining our direct access to space and in providing high-quality job opportunities in Central Florida," said Congresswoman Kosmas. "Our common-sense legislation will bring people together to encourage the development of the commercial spaceflight industry so we can help minimize the gap and protect the Space Coast's highly skilled aerospace workforce."

"Maintaining the Space Coast's leadership in space means incorporating a host of approaches and initiatives," said Congressman Bill Posey. "This is yet one more among many that will be needed to keep us moving forward and will help foster the development of commercial space technology."

The State of Florida is widely recognized for its historic contributions to human spaceflight and through Space Florida continues to develop Cape Canaveral as a hub for commercial space transportation. The Centers will augment these efforts by providing valuable R&D support for Cape Canaveral's potential commercial partners.

According to Frank DiBello, President of Space Florida, "this bill provides a foundation of research and development activity to support the government's long-standing policy of commercial reliance wherever possible. Nowhere is commercial reliance more enabling to the future diversification of so many industries than in our space program. Commercial developmental and application space technologies will serve as an important catalyst to the innovation economy we all desire for our future."

The Centers will be responsible for providing educational, technical and analytical assistance to NASA and other Federal agencies as well as disseminating results to other stakeholders. They will be established through a competitive process based on applications by higher education institutions that meet certain requirements, including demonstrated R&D capabilities, established space transportation and aerospace R&D programs. Additionally, at least one Center should be located near an active commercial spaceport and Florida universities, including Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, could compete to host one of the Centers.

“The U.S. commercial launch industry has reached another crossroads. After almost two decades of decline, the retirement of the Space Shuttle is offering a new opportunity for the U.S. to reclaim its competitiveness in this strategically important enterprise,” said Christina Frederick-Recascino, vice president for research at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. “With emerging markets for commercial human spaceflight, and new technologies being applied throughout the industry, this is a ripe area for applied research by universities.”

The NASA Commercial Space Transportation Centers of Excellence program is based on the successful Federal Aviation Administration Air Transportation COE program, which, since enactment in 1990, has established eight centers that conduct long- and short-term aviation related research, education and training. Under the program, federal funding is matched by contributions from COE member universities, their affiliates from industry, and other stakeholders.

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